



Representative Louise M. Slaughter
Chairwoman, House Committee on Rules
Representing New York's 28th District

PRESS RELEASE

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Slaughter Applauds Passage of Troop Withdrawal Timeline

Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Bill Includes Critical Funding For Domestic Priorities

Washington, DC – Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Chairwoman of the House Committee on Rules, applauds passage of a strong timeline for troop withdrawal from Iraq, as well as, critical domestic priorities for our ailing economy. The provisions were passed as part of H.R. 2642, the Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2008.

“At a time of economic emergency, this war continues to be waged at a staggering cost to the American taxpayer and at the expense of our economic security,” said Rep. Slaughter.

The legislation requires that troops begin redeployment from Iraq within 30 days with a goal of completing the full withdrawal in eighteen months.

“We require a withdrawal not because we concede one inch to those who would do our nation harm, but because basic respect for our soldiers demands it,” continued Rep. Slaughter.

In addition, the legislation dramatically expands the education benefits that veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan will receive under the GI bill.

“Part of the cost of waging war is ensuring that our men and women in uniform have the resources they need to resume their lives upon their return home,” said Slaughter. **“Not only do our troops deserve a chance to go to college, but every dollar we spend on education today will come back to bolster our economy tomorrow.”**

The Democratic proposal totals \$183.7 billion, just under the President’s request for appropriated dollars.

The legislation includes two new initiatives not requested by the President: an expanded GI Bill to provide improved education benefits for veterans, and a 13 week extension of

unemployment benefits for those workers who are unable to find a job in today's rough economy.

BACKGROUND ON LEGISLATION

The legislation was taken up as three amendments. The following are highlights from the legislative package:

Amendment #1: \$162.5 billion for the Department of Defense, funding the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan through the summer of 2009.

Amendment #2: Iraq Policy Conditions.

□□□ **Out in 18 months:** Requires that troops begin redeployment from Iraq within 30 days with a goal of completing withdrawal of combat troops by December of 2009.

□□□ **Iraqis Pay for Iraq Reconstruction:** Requires that U.S. reconstruction aid for Iraq be matched dollar-for-dollar by the Iraqi Government.

□□□ **No Permanent Bases in Iraq:** Prohibits the establishment of permanent bases in Iraq.

□□□ **Prohibits Torture:** Prohibits interrogation techniques not authorized in the Army Field Manual.

Amendment #3: Expanded GI Bill, Unemployment Insurance Extension, and other critical needs.

□□□ **Expands GI Benefits for Veterans Education:** Expands the education benefits veterans receive under the GI bill to restore the promise of a full, four-year college education, and make the veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan part of an American economic recovery, just like the veterans of World War II were. This provision is fully offset.

□□□ **Extends Unemployment Compensation:** Extends unemployment benefits for workers who have exhausted their benefits by up to 13 weeks in every state as well as an additional 13 weeks in states with high unemployment. The number of Americans looking for work has grown by 800,000 over the last year, and the number of American jobs has declined by 260,000 since the beginning of 2008.

The full text of Rep. Slaughter's remarks can be found below:

M. Speaker,

With a deep appreciation for the importance of the legislation before us today, the Rules Committee has reported out a rule that allows for a full, thorough debate on three amendments critical to the future of our nation.

This process will give each Member ample opportunity to vote their conscience on whether to fund the war or not, place conditions on our Iraq policy or not, or choose to support veterans over millionaires.

M. Speaker,

The legislation we are about to take up was forged with the idea of consensus. It meets the spending requests made by President Bush, including the \$5.8 billion he asked for to strengthen the levees in New Orleans.

In addition, it does not include a single earmark except those explicitly requested by his Administration.

On the other hand, this legislation is also not a blank check because it is important to remember why we are really here today.

This is the sixth year of this war in Iraq,

More than 4,000 U.S. service men and women, twenty eight from my district alone, are dead.

Tens of thousands have been wounded and physically disabled while far too many suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and a host of other mental health issues.

What's more, the civilian death toll is simply devastating. Millions - not thousands - of Iraqi men, women, and children are dead and millions more have been forced into refugee camps or other countries that will accept them.

At a time of economic emergency, when the American family is under siege, this war continues to be waged at a staggering cost to the American taxpayer and at the expense of our economic security.

M. Speaker,

A few weeks ago, the New York Times reported on the Bush Administration's practice of paying off supposedly independent military analysts to shade the truth about what was really happening in Iraq.

This Administration was so concerned that Americans would find out the truth that they paid former US military personnel to read from prescreened, whitewashed Pentagon talking points to hide from the American people what was happening in their name.

This may be the greatest foreign policy disaster in American history.

And the American people overwhelmingly are calling for it to end.

They have seen that this insurgency is far from nearing its end.

They were told, "trust us, the Iraqi oil revenues will pay for the reconstruction."

Yet, the American people are feeling the pinch as their hard earned tax dollars finance the rebuilding of a foreign nation while their country's own economy is falling apart at the seams.

They were told, "trust us, we will make sure your sons and daughters have the equipment they need."

Yet, we have all seen reports of desperate searches through junk heaps to refit ill-equipped armored vehicles.

And we have all heard the tales of worried mothers scraping together the family savings to purchase adequate body armor for their children.

They were told, "trust us, we will ensure that our fighting men and women will be taken care of

when they return home.”

Yet, we all remember the disgraceful images of Walter Reed and the recent reports of appalling living conditions for our troops stationed in the barracks at Fort Worth.

M. Speaker,

Under such circumstances, it would be an abdication of our duty to perpetuate a clearly unacceptable status quo.

For that reason, the legislation we take up today represents a break from the past and a renewed chance of changing a stale, stagnant situation.

It does indeed provide immediate funding for our soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan who are currently in the field.

However, while the needs of our troops always will be at the forefront of our national priorities, funding for this war must not come in the form of a blank check.

This funding only comes with conditions that will begin the process for ending this war.

The Supplemental requires that troops begin redeployment from Iraq within 30 days with a goal of completing the full withdrawal in eighteen months.

We do this not because we concede one inch to those who would do our nation harm, nor because we lack the will to fight for our national security.

We do this because basic respect for our soldiers demands it.

No longer will they be asked to fight an open-ended conflict whose finish line keeps moving.

And in keeping with this respect for our troops, this legislation mandates that soldiers must be properly rested and meet the Administration's own standards for "combat readiness" before redeployment.

Furthermore, we will honor the parents who continue to serve our nation by finally providing full funding for military daycare centers.

This legislation also keeps our promises to our veterans.

Part of the cost of waging war is ensuring that our men and women in uniform have the resources they need to resume their lives upon their return home.

The bill before us today dramatically expands the education benefits that veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan will receive under the GI bill.

Not only do our troops deserve this benefit and much more, but every dollar we spend on education today will come back to bolster our economy tomorrow.

And I would add that this provision is fully paid for by asking the wealthiest, who saw their tax rates drop to 19.6% in 2004 from 24.2 % in 2000 pay up to \$500.

At no time in our history has our country been burdened with massive tax cuts for the wealthy during a time of war.

Such actions of fiscal incompetence by the Bush Administration have left this country's economy struggling and American families paying the price.

Rising levels of sustained joblessness require us to extend unemployment benefits to those workers who understandably cannot find a job. This bill does just that.

Additionally, up until this point, the American people have been unfairly asked to shoulder the full weight of the reconstruction effort in Iraq.

The underlying legislation requires that U.S reconstruction aid be matched dollar-for-dollar by the Iraqi government, removing some of the pressure from families already struggling to make ends meet.

Furthermore, it prohibits the establishment of permanent bases in Iraq, blocking this Administration from saddling the American people with a costly occupation long after it is gone.

M. Speaker,

Our fellow citizens have been sent to fight in a conflict far away from home. We owe them our support - not only with words, but with deeds.

This bill is about who we are as a society and the values that we hold.

And I am proud to support this rule and the underlying legislation.

I ask my colleagues do the same and reserve the balance of my time.

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